# Editorials

## Smoking Aloft: Fliers Happy

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), a professional anti-smoking organization, continues to press for further federal regulation of smoking on airlines.

But a survey of frequent-flying members of the International Airline Passengers Association (IAPA) shows virtually no interest in such regulation.

IAPA queried its 55,000 U. S. members on a variety of subjects. Seventy percent of the 13,311 respondents made suggestions about airline passenger service improvements. Only 281—or only one of every 47 travelers—said anything about smoking-nonsmoking accommodations.

The IAPA report showed far more pressing concerns about air travel. Seat size, baggage handling and meal and beverage services led the list in the survey. Others ahead of the smoking question included on-time performance, fares, check-in and seat assignment procedures and flight attendant attitudes and procedures.

IAPA describes its members generally as "high-frequency business and personal/pleasure air travelers who are predominantly male, highly educated, of a professional or a business status, and in the middle- to high-income brackets."

## Those Flawed Health Charges

Anti-smokers become impatient, to say the least, when they are reminded that the scientific jury is still out on the cigarette controversy. They dislike reminders that the scientific case is incomplete, flawed and in some respects contradictory. They dismiss such contentions from the tobacco industry as "special interest."

Still, the flaws and contradictions keep appearing. Just in the past few months:

- The government announced results of its $115 million study to see if reducing cholesterol, blood pressure and smoking would help reduce heart fatalities in middle-age men. The reductions made no significant difference.
- Researchers writing in a scientific journal reported that the risk of ulcerative colitis among smokers is less than one-third that in nonsmokers. (Although the journal published a one and one-half page editorial to explain that such statistics do not prove cause and effect.)
- A new study about bladder cancer suggested that scientists must look to factors other than smoking for causal relationships.
- An independent physician wrote a medical journal to warn that smoking restrictions are being enacted without adequate scientific evidence of their need and in spite of much contradictory evidence.

People who keep making news with proposals to punish and restrict smokers and the tobacco industry don't like to talk about these things. But we think the public is entitled to hear them.

# Letters to the Editor

Ours is an ethnic daily published entirely in the Lithuanian language. . . . Having its roots in a country that suffered from the Nazis and is currently suffering under the Communists, the Lithuanian-American community is highly responsive to human rights issues.

Whenever the opportunity arises, and with the help of the very fine *Tobacco Observer*, I try to educate our readers—through stories and editorials—on the contribution of tobacco to the economic well-being of Illinois and the United States, on the human rights issues involved in attempts to ban public smoking and intimidate tobacco consumers, and on the misuse and misrepresentation of scientific evidence resorted to by the anti-tobacco lobby in the latter's endeavor to impose its ideological viewpoint by laws aimed at discriminating against smokers and those who service them.

**Mykolas J. Drunga**
**Associate Editor**
***Draugas***
**Chicago, Ill.**

I recently had the opportunity to review your publication, The Tobacco Observer, and found it to be quite interesting. It is a rare occasion, during these times of the health promotion and wellness "revolution"—where tobacco consumption is targeted as a #1 cause of almost all of the chronic disease conditions afflicting our society, that a clearly written document is found representing the other side of the argument.

**Brian A. Witte**
**Bay Medical Education**
**Bay City, Mich.**

I thank you for continuing to forward this most informative journal. No such source of information exists here.

Having been engaged in the smoking pipe industry since 1947 you will readily understand my interest in your news.

**John L. Barber**
**Surrey, England**

*"I'm sitting on a gold mine . . . just as soon as someone discovers how to light them."*

# Commentary

"Little has changed" since an international symposium concluded in 1974 that little evidence exists to implicate second-hand smoke as a health hazard, writes physician Paul B. Mossman, medical director of Albuquerque's Sandia Laboratories in a letter to the *Journal of Occupational Medicine* (2/83).

The uncontrolled studies in today's literature that purport to prove health harm to nonsmokers from ambient tobacco smoke offer no assistance to persons seeking reliable information, he said.

"We are witnessing regulatory and legislative action without the benefit of reliable objective data," Mossman wrote.

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"Were it within the power of most lawmakers, we suspect that risk would be legislated out of existence.

"Whether it's banning fireworks, requiring air bags on automobiles or outlawing even the most unlikely of cancer-causing agents, paternalistic government always seems busy 'protecting' us from one evil or another. Never mind that millions of Americans already feel that government has gotten to be just a tad overzealous on the consumer safety front. . . ."

*Editorial*
*Grand Junction (Colo.) Sentinel*
*12/30/82*

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"Scientists believe they are closing in fast on the secrets of cancer," began the New York *Times* feature on recent progress in understanding the genetic factors involved in cancer development.

The reason for scientists' optimism, the article said, is research suggesting that most or all forms of cancer may result from a small number of genetic events that cause certain cells to grow out of control.

Such research, the *Times* said, includes identification of 15 different genes, called oncogenes, that appear to be involved in producing cancer; discovery of "biological response modifiers," like interferon, that may be able to stimulate the body's normal immune system to shrink tumors; and identification of the first virus that appears to cause cancer in humans, suggesting that vaccines may be developed to protect against cancer.

The article quotes Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center chancellor Lewis Thomas: "I now believe [cancer's secrets] could begin to fall into place at almost any time, starting next year or even next week, depending on the intensity, quality and luck of basic research."

*The Tobacco Observer*

presents information and comment on public events of interest to the tobacco industry. It recognizes that there is diversity of opinion about tobacco use and that charges against tobacco are widely publicized while less attention is given to differing views, which are included in our columns. Its aim is to aid full, free, and informed discussion in the public interest, in the conviction that the smoking and health controversy must be resolved by scientific research.

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